



The Love Poems

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John Donne's standing as one of the greatest poets in the English language is now thoroughly established, and critics such as T. S. Eliot and F. R. Leavis have found in Donne's poetry qualities profoundly responsive to the modern age. While Donne is famous for his religious poetry, his love poems are among the most beautiful ever written, and this collection brings them together for the first time.

Donne was a man who knew all the many faces of love-- physical passion, jealousy, rapture, grief and parting-- and possessed the genius to distill his experiences into poetry. The potency of his writing has lost none of its effect; Donne's love poetry taps the reservoir of feelings and emotions common to all human beings.

Before Donne was ordained as a priest in 1615, he wrote sonnets (such as "The Dream" and "The Ecstasy"), elegies (such as "To His Mistress Going to Bed" and "Love's Progress"), and wedding songs ("St. Valentine's Day" and "Epithalamion"), all of which glitter with an eroticism that truly marries body and soul.

Charles Fowkes, author of a critically acclaimed biography of Rembrandt and several anthologies of short stories, has gathered those poems in which Donne is most passionate and most lyrical. The result is this lovely volume- the perfect gift for every beloved, a book of poems to press flowers in and to keep by the heart.

The Love Poems Details

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From Reader Review The Love Poems for online ebook

Lydia St Giles says

Donne was a worldly character, very far from the image of the dweller in a garret. He volunteered to fight and sailed with Essex to take part in the sack of Cadiz. A Catholic at a time when this made public office difficult, he succeeded in getting elected as an MP. His early university studies could not, because of his faith, lead to his obtaining a degree yet, later in life, Donne's success at the court of James I led to his being awarded a doctorate in divinity.

The "Poems of Love" come from a man who married secretly and was dismissed from his job as a result. There is romance and sensuality, coupled with cynicism about fidelity and despair at the prospect of death separating the lovers. However, "Holy Sonnets" take up more than fifty pages of this book, so the word love is used in its widest sense.

What is striking is the language used.. The English of the late 16th and early 17th centuries gives a strong flavour to the many poems in this (beautifully produced) volume. Changes in the spoken language mean that the modern reader will not see a rhyme where the writer intended, as in:

"Come live with mee and bee my love,
And we will some new pleasures prove".

This is one of several poems which the British reader will be familiar with in a modernised version. I've enjoyed the immersion into the language which Donne used.

Miroku Nemeth says

Those who know Donne, know how passionate his poetry is, whether writing of romantic or spiritual love. A contemporary of Shakespeare, for many modern readers the rich complexity of his English may be a problem, but, like with the words of the Bard of Avon, taking the time to decipher and meditate upon Donne's lines of poetry is well worth the time. I honestly prefer a collection like this many times over to Shakespeare's sonnets; the words of Donne just seem more transparently deeply felt than the master wordsmith Shakespeare, whose true feelings and emotions seem buried beneath innumerable ingenious personas.

A sample

Elegy X: The Dream

IMAGE of her whom I love, more than she,
Whose fair impression in my faithful heart
Makes me her medal, and makes her love me,
As kings do coins, to which their stamps impart
The value ; go, and take my heart from hence,
Which now is grown too great and good for me.
Honours oppress weak spirits, and our sense
Strong objects dull ; the more, the less we see.
When you are gone, and reason gone with you,

Then fantasy is queen and soul, and all ;
She can present joys meaner than you do,
Convenient, and more proportional.
So, if I dream I have you, I have you,
For all our joys are but fantastical ;
And so I 'scape the pain, for pain is true ;
And sleep, which locks up sense, doth lock out all.
After a such fruition I shall wake,
And, but the waking, nothing shall repent ;
And shall to love more thankful sonnets make,
Than if more honour, tears, and pains were spent.
But, dearest heart and dearer image, stay ;
Alas ! true joys at best are dream enough ;
Though you stay here, you pass too fast away,
For even at first life's taper is a snuff.
Fill'd with her love, may I be rather grown
Mad with much heart, than idiot with none.

Rebecca says

I could read this book over and over again for the rest of my life.

E. Merrill says

Pre-standardized english spelling is undoubtedly a conspiracy against dyslexics.

Sonja Trbojevic says

Sublime

Starbubbles says

I don't know, I just don't think that I get poetry. Or maybe I don't get love. Or maybe I just don't get love poetry. Or maybe love = bleh at the moment factored into this the most. I just didn't feel it or comprehend stuff...

Whatever, I gave up on this.

James says

Too much of its time for me to really enjoy. Donne eroticizes women, he places them on pedestals and

chastises them for their inconstancy, but he doesn't seem to have talked to them much. The language and structure feels a little archaic, as do many of the references--I probably would have benefitted from a text with more annotations.

There are little bursts of humor that surprise you...and play better than the torment. My favorites here included A Fever, The Funeral and A Jet Ring Set.

Michael Arnold says

This is a very beautiful book, and I always like John Donne. I found myself feeling less involved and interested in the later, more religious poems - the early love poems (though) made buying this book really worth it.

Josh Hornbeck says

"The Love Poems of John Donne" ranges from transcendent observations about love that continue to have resonance, to the petulant ramblings of a stalker-y emo kid in Freshman English who has a better vocabulary than the professor. The transcendent poems are worth the work it takes to really dive deeply into Donne's language, but the petulant ones are insufferable.

Lori says

One of my favorite collections of love poetry, this is a staple in my library that I like to re-read on occasion.

Tracy says

This was my first copy of John Donne's poetry. I picked my copy up in Berkeley in the 1980's because I'd heard A Valediction Forbidding Mourning and recognized it as one of the greatest poems ever written.

I would read these on my own, now and again, and it led me to more and more of his works. It led me to more and more poetry.

Perhaps this should be considered a threshold book?

Hee hee hee...

Amy says

This is one of the handful of poetry books that I own. To be honest, if I understood more of Donne's context, I would most likely rate it higher. When understood, I found his poems to be very romantic and honest. If

translated into my dumb language, some themes would be:

Hey Baby, Why Wait Until Marriage?
Let's Face It, There Will Always Be Other Hoes.
I Must Have Felt A False Love Yesterday
Because I Love You Even More Today.
Women Are Lying Whores.
I Can't Give You My Heart Because You Already
Own It.

druidessprincess says

*"'Twas so; but this, all pleasures fancies be.
If ever any beauty I did see,
Which I desired, and got, 'twas but a dream of thee."*

Oh, how I love Donne. I'm such a sucker for the romance. :) Review to come...

Zahra Barlas says

Impossible to not fall in love with Donne's love sonnets.

Jennifer says

Back in 1998 I was a hopeless romantic. Hence, I read and memorized a lot of Donne's poems.
